



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement in Support of Amendment #1 Offered By Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)
Markup of H.R. 2499, the Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2009
Committee on Natural Resources
July 22, 2009

Thank you.

As with the amendment offered by Congressman Brown from South Carolina to expressly require that plebiscite ballots be printed in English as well as Spanish, I do not believe this amendment is necessary to secure the result it seeks to achieve. Nonetheless, I do not oppose it.

The Puerto Rico political status bill reported by this Committee in the last Congress, H.R. 900, would have authorized the Secretary of Treasury to allocate up to \$5 million for the plebiscite required by that bill. These funds would have been transferred from the federal treasury to the government of Puerto Rico pursuant to section 7652 of the Internal Revenue Code, which grants Puerto Rico a portion of collections of the federal tax on rum produced on the Island.

H.R. 2499 does not include a similar provision. Because H.R. 900 in the last Congress would have required a plebiscite, it was appropriate for the federal government to provide the funds to pay for it. Since the bill before us would authorize—as opposed to require—plebiscites, it is more appropriate for the government of Puerto Rico to pay for the votes itself. The Island's

political status is an issue of fundamental importance. The government of Puerto Rico should be—and is—willing to spend money from its own coffers in order to carry out the process and resolve the central question of its political future.

Accordingly, to remove any doubt that Puerto Rico will pay all costs associated with the plebiscites, I do not oppose the amendment.